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Statement by ValorUS on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Taking Action to Support Refugees Worldwide

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SACRAMENTO, CA - ValorUS (VALOR) joins the entire world in mourning the reckless loss of life, destruction, and human suffering that has occurred in recent weeks as a result of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. President Putin's unconscionable decision to assert control by attacking a sovereign neighbor nation strikes a familiar nerve with survivors of sexual violence, and VALOR unequivocally condemns this shameful abuse of power. We stand in solidarity with the peace-seeking people of Ukraine and encourage leaders of the world to work together in finding a solution that does not result in more catastrophic harm for Ukrainians.

As a coalition representing rape crisis centers, and others working to address sexual violence, we are also devastatingly aware of the consequences that will come from the mass displacement of people seeking safety from violence - including sexual assault, abuse, and exploitation. The anti-sexual and domestic violence movements have not always succeeded in taking an intersectional approach to our work or in taking action on issues that are not brought directly to our door. In our report [Reciprocal Advancement](#), we discussed how the movements to end sexual violence and end domestic violence can buoy the other, elevating awareness of and attention to both. Similarly, we believe that elevating other connected issues will support both the ends to end gender-based violence and the related oppression. We should take a stance on the abuses in Ukraine, just as we should about other places and communities that also face displacement and violence.

However, we believe there is an urgent need and responsibility for organizations with a mission focused on ending violence to engage in concrete action that will contribute to alleviating the suffering of the Ukrainian and other communities and to find ways to make ending war and the forced displacement of people a part of our vision for ending violence.

According to the [United Nations](#), the vast majority of the 3 million refugees fleeing Ukraine since Russia's invasion are women and girls, who are at disproportionate risk of sexual violence and trafficking. However, the high price of conflict on women, children, and all people



who experience sexual violence is not one reserved to countries outside of the United States. The same systemic violence we are seeing in Ukraine is occurring elsewhere around the globe, including within our own communities. We know that racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ people, undocumented individuals, and people with disabilities are most often the targets of sexual violence and that poverty, low socioeconomic status, gender inequality, exposure to community crime, and violence make the risk of someone perpetrating sexual assault increase. We cannot prevent sexual violence unless we focus on eradicating the social conditions that allow sexual violence to thrive. We cannot be silent during times of racial inequity, and civil and international unrest because we know that it is women, children, and survivors of violence who carry that burden the heaviest.

At times, we may be unsure of how we can work to end these other forms of violence, and that is okay, but what isn't okay is doing nothing. Beyond our words, VALOR will jump into action where we can. We will be donating \$6,500 to support the work of 4 different organizations to provide relief directly to communities experiencing violence: [UNHCR](#), [Islamic Relief USA](#), [Al Otro Lado](#), and [Adeso](#). The world is appropriately outraged about the abuses in Ukraine and pained about the displacement of over a million people. As we mobilize for Ukraine, it is also an opportunity to reflect on our apathy in relation to violence in other countries and within our nation. We encourage you to join us in amplifying the work of these organizations and contributing to their efforts.

As part of a global movement to advance equity and eradicate oppression, we will also be creating a space to continue this crucial conversation. We hope to acknowledge the critical links between sexual abuse and other types of violence while addressing the disproportionate impact on the communities of Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Please join us on March 25, 2022, for a [National VALOR Discussion: Taking Action to Support Refugees Worldwide](#). We all have a role to play in the atrocities we see across the world including here in the U.S. We hope this conversation will provide a clear understanding and action steps to how we need to expand our views on violence prevention.